



**{In Archive} Hurricane Ike and oil and gas - ready and secured?**

**Nat Miullo** to: Rob Lawrence

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Best of luck this weekend and afterwards. Looks like your energy stewards are well braced. Thoughts and prayers go with your good preparation.

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<http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=arjn0PjLmPDg&refer=home>

(Bloomberg) -- Hurricane Ike tripled in size in the central Gulf of Mexico as it churned on a weekend collision course with the 5.6 million residents of the Houston area, where coastal communities prepared to evacuate.

The system's strongest winds extend as far as 115 miles (185 kilometers) from the eye, up from 35 miles yesterday, the Miami-based National Hurricane Center said today. Ike's wind field is now larger than that of Katrina, the storm that devastated New Orleans in 2005, said **Jeff Masters**, the director of meteorology at private forecaster **Weather Underground Inc.** "The total amount of energy is more powerful than Katrina, so we could be seeing a storm surge that could rival Katrina," Masters said. The storm is so large "the location doesn't matter much; it is going to inundate a huge part of the Texas coast."

Galveston, parts of southern Houston and areas south of the city and near the Texas coast were under a **mandatory evacuation** order starting at noon today, local officials said at a press conference. The coast may see a storm surge of as much as 20 feet (6 meters). Ike is following a **track similar** to the 1900 Galveston hurricane that killed 8,000 people.

### **Felt Before Landfall**

Ike was a Category 2 hurricane with sustained winds of 100 mph, up from 80 mph yesterday, the center said in an advisory at 10 a.m. Houston time. Its central pressure is more like that associated with a Category 3 or 4 storm, Masters said.

The storm is moving west-northwest at 10 mph, with landfall south of Galveston on Sept. 13. Because of its size, Ike will be felt along the Texas coast long before its eye makes landfall. The center's forecasters said Ike may strengthen to at least a major hurricane with Category 3 intensity, meaning sustained winds of at least 111 mph, before landfall. Other forecasters predict Ike may become a Category 4 storm, the second-strongest on

the five-step [Saffir-Simpson scale](#), packing winds from 131 to 155 mph. The storm is forecast to sweep through the center of the Gulf, missing the offshore Louisiana oil and natural gas fields. The Gulf is home to about a quarter of U.S. oil production. Many rigs and platforms shut more than a week ago as Hurricane Gustav passed through the Gulf remained closed.

### **Oil Production**

About 96 percent of all oil production in the Gulf has been shut in along with 73.1 percent of natural gas facilities, according to the [Minerals Management Service](#), a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior. President [George W. Bush](#) declared an emergency for Texas, his home state, and Governor [Rick Perry](#) readied 1,350 buses to evacuate residents in preparation for Ike's landfall. As many as 7,500 Texas National Guard members are on standby. Houston's population is 2.2 million, making it the fourth-biggest U.S. city, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, and its metropolitan area, with a population of 5.6 million, is the sixth-largest in the U.S. [Jim Rouiller](#), a meteorologist with Planalytics Inc. in Wayne, Pennsylvania, said he's particularly worried about storm surge damage around Galveston Bay, on the coast southeast of Houston, which may be in the top right quadrant of the storm field where rains and winds are most powerful. Some parts of the Texas-Louisiana coast may get as much as 15 inches of rain, the hurricane center said.

### **Biological Lab**

The University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, home of one of the most secure biological labs in the U.S., has begun evacuating its 260 patients to Austin and San Antonio, spokeswoman Kristen Hensley said by telephone. The school, with about 3,500 students and faculty, will close its 84-acre campus at noon. Its biological labs include a level-4 bio-safety facility, which is also in the process of shutting down, Hensley said. ``It's in the strongest and most heavily reinforced building on campus; it can withstand severe wind and storm surges," Hensley said. ``We have secured all the pathogens and decontaminated all the lab work surfaces." The lab's systems are backed up with emergency generators to provide electricity in case power goes out, she said. NASA's Johnson Space Center heeded the evacuation order, preparing to shut its 1,600-acre facility in Houston that houses Mission Control and the training ground for [astronauts](#).

### **New Orleans**

Some 15,000 people work at the space center. It sits across the street from an arm of Galveston Bay. ``Our buildings can withstand a hurricane, but there's some concern about the expected tidal surge," said [John Ira Petty](#), a spokesman at Johnson. Flight engineers left for Austin a few days ago. They will manage the International Space Station from temporary facilities there, Petty said. The [New Orleans](#) area, including Lake Pontchartrain, was under a tropical-storm warning for Ike. That means such conditions, with sustained winds of 39 to 73 mph, are expected within 24 hours. The warning stretches along the coast from Cameron, Louisiana, east to the Mississippi-Alabama border. New Orleans was spared the worst of Hurricane Gustav when it struck the state last week. Gustav killed 25 people in Louisiana. A hurricane watch was in place from Cameron, Louisiana, west to Port Mansfield, Texas. The watch means hurricane

conditions, with sustained winds of at least 74 mph, are possible within 36 hours.

### Hurricane Dolly

In July, Hurricane Dolly, with winds of 100 mph, struck the Texas coast at South Padre Island, about 35 miles northeast of Brownsville. The potential for destruction from Hurricane Ike has caused oil refiners to begin shutting plants near Houston and producers to evacuate platforms in the Gulf. Exxon Mobil Corp.'s Baytown facility, 17 miles east of Houston, is the country's biggest, with a capacity of 586,000 barrels a day. The **Louisiana Offshore Oil Port**, which is the largest U.S. oil-import terminal and handles 13 percent of imports, said it closed marine operations because of Ike. Crude oil for October delivery fell \$1.61, or 1.6 percent, to \$100.97 a barrel at 11:27 a.m. on the New York Mercantile Exchange. Futures touched \$100.10, the lowest since April 2. Prices are up 29 percent from a year ago.

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### ***Sustainable communities provide the best long term national security***

*When we can only be distressed about our own circumstances, let's share Daoud Hari's story, and the image of the child waiving from the grass (pg. 97) [The Translator](#)*

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